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TRANSPORTATION FOR U/S POLICY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAIR](#) [ETRD](#) [CA](#)

SUBJECT: Air Canada adds/alters flights to avoid U.S. Transit
visas

Summary

¶1. Air Canada is adding to and altering flights schedules to accommodate travelers seeking to avoid transit of the United States. Air Canada is explicitly touting new non-stop Asian flights as providing "the added convenience of avoiding U.S. transit visa requirements." Air Canada says the increased complications or restrictions that the U.S. has put on travelers transiting the U.S. has "definitely helped us." End summary.

¶2. In an early January 2005 press release trumpeting growth in non-stop flights between Canada and China, Ben Smith, Vice President of Planning for Air Canada, stated: "Combined with our major expansion of services throughout Latin America, also via our Toronto hub, Air Canada offers international travelers between Asia and South America the added convenience of avoiding U.S. transit visa requirements." Also, with respect to the recent addition of direct service to Australia he remarked "it means significant added convenience for citizens of Australia and other travelers impacted by U.S. government visa requirements when transiting via the United States." Current Air Canada service to Australia requires a stop in Honolulu.

¶3. Effective June 2, 2005 Air Canada will introduce non-stop service between Toronto and Beijing. Air Canada will operate four non-stop flights per week from Toronto to the Chinese capital, complementing its daily non-stop flights to Beijing and Shanghai from Vancouver, and twice daily Hong Kong flights including new non-stop service from Toronto. Air Canada is boosting seating capacity between Canada and China by 16 per cent and providing freight forwarders with 45 per cent more cargo tonnage from one year ago. Twice weekly non-stop direct flights to Australia commenced December 16, 2004.

¶4. Air Canada is Canada's flag carrier; it is the 13th largest commercial airline in the world and serves more than 27 million customers annually. From its main hub in Toronto, the carrier operates non-stop flights to Hong Kong, Tokyo, Seoul and Delhi, (a new service and the only non-stop link between North America and India). From its Pacific Asian gateway in Vancouver, Air Canada serves Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing, Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya and Seoul with daily non-stop flights. On January 21, 2005, China granted Canada "approved destination status" which allows Chinese citizens to travel to Canada as tourists; previously they could only visit for business purposes.

¶5. Comment: We understand that Spanish airline Iberia is also adding or altering routes in order to offer passengers the convenience of avoiding U.S. Transit visa requirements, by moving away from the Miami transit hub (where connections are made to the Caribbean, and Central and South America). Brazilian airline VARIG and Japan Airlines (JAL) are reportedly considering dropping Los Angeles as a stop on their Sao Paulo - Narita route because of the US\$100 transit visa requirement. It seems a reasonable assumption on the part of Air Canada that for similar reasons many Asian travelers may likewise choose to use Vancouver or Toronto as the jumping off point to South America rather than Los Angeles or Miami.

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